



LAM professionals' roles and attitudes to user participation in Norway and Sweden

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Libraries
Archives
Museums
Participation
Subject positions
Interpretative, repertoires

ABSTRACT

Recent studies provide insights into library, archive and museum (LAM) professionals' attitudes toward user participation, yet they do not address how the diversity of roles LAM professionals assume may influence their attitudes toward participation. The reported findings based on a questionnaire to LAM professionals in Norway and Sweden indicate that user participation is viewed differently depending on how the professionals perceive their roles in relation to those of other professions. Analysis of the underlying relationships between the questionnaire respondents' perceptions and attitudes identifies three subject positions with associated interpretative repertoires: power sharing, outsourcing and engaging experts. Additional analysis using a four-quadrant model of user engagement that differentiates between bottom-up and top-down approaches and between areas of organizational activity suggests that the respondents primarily see themselves as experts within their respective fields and have yet to relinquish this role in favor of a more bottom-up approach to user participation.

1. Introduction

User participation has become a major focus area in the cultural field. This increasing focus on participation in the culture sector might be seen as a renewal of the strategy of cultural democracy of the 1970s, which, with inspiration from France, has formed an important foundation in Nordic cultural policy ever since. Cultural democracy is based on the premise that the state and local authorities should not only fund art and culture, thereby increasing accessibility to them, but should also work to promote the cultural expression of individuals and groups in local communities (Jochumsen, Skot-Hansen, & Rasmussen, 2017), which inherently implies the use of participatory practices. In accordance with these policy aims, an increased focus on user participation has occurred across libraries, archives and museums, the so-called LAM institutions. A shift toward greater user engagement and participatory activities has been seen in libraries moving from collections to connections in which user and community interaction have become central (Jochumsen, Rasmussen, & Skot-Hansen, 2012; Söderholm & Nolin,

2015). Technological developments have facilitated archives' increased interaction with users, such as through crowdsourcing and metadata creation initiatives (Roued-Cunliffe, 2020). Increased user participation in museums has been seen in a shift away from one-way communication toward community-focused dialog (Simon, 2010, 2016). Broadly, user participation has been a way for the, on the one hand, LAMs to foster empowerment in their communities and, on the other hand, for them to fulfil their social missions as public sphere institutions and obtain legitimacy (Audunson, Hobohm, & Tóth, 2020).

2. Problem statement

LAM professionals are central to the success and overall outcomes of participatory endeavors. The way they approach user participation will most certainly influence the overall outcomes and societal impact resulting from their participatory endeavors as well as the manner and degree to which cultural democracy is ultimately achieved. However, policy aims must be interpreted and implemented by professionals

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2023.101249>

Received 13 December 2022; Received in revised form 22 March 2023; Accepted 6 May 2023

Available online 24 May 2023

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working in diverse contexts. This raises the question of how LAM professionals understand or perceive their work in fulfilling these cultural policy goals, which brings into focus LAM professionals' perceptions of their own professional roles as well as their attitudes toward user participation and participatory activities. There is a relatively small but growing body of research on these topics. Briefly, and which will be discussed more in depth in the next section, research on library professionals' perception of their own roles shows evidence of a unified professional culture, though with variations in the way they perceive their own roles and the competencies needed to carry them out (Johnston et al., 2021). Research also suggests that there is a variation in the role perceptions across the professional groups and that LAM professionals are open to user participation, yet may limit power sharing (Andresen, Huvila, & Stokstad, 2020; Audunson et al., 2020). Specifically, librarians appear to view user participation as a resource, yet their views on how much control they, as information professionals, should retain varies (Huvila, 2020).

Collectively, the findings from these studies suggest that LAM professionals are generally positive toward user participation but have different perceptions of their professional roles and, importantly, vary in their attitudes regarding the nature of their role(s) in relation to LAM users. However, while these studies provide some insight into LAM professionals' views on participation and on the way they perceive their professional roles, there remains a need to understand how LAM professionals' perceptions of their professional roles might relate to their attitudes toward participation. Bringing to light this relationship would provide a more reflective and nuanced understanding of the ways in which professionals approach participation and, thereby, the realization of cultural democracy.

This study aims to contribute to our understanding of how LAM professionals' perceptions of their roles correlate with their broader views on user participation. This is elicited through the three following research questions: 1) How do LAM professionals perceive their professional roles in relation to those of neighboring professions?; 2) What are LAM professionals' attitudes toward user participation?; and 3) How do LAM professionals' perceptions of their roles correlate with their views on user participation? These insights are essential for understanding the more nuanced ways that the LAMs are approaching user participation and working to fulfil the broader strategies of the culture sector, specifically the fostering of cultural democracy through the inclusion of people's own cultural expressions. Furthermore, consideration is given to what implications the underlying relationships and overall views on user participation might have in relation to cultural policy aims and goals.

3. Literature review

User participation takes on many forms and there are various factors that can influence the overall approach to and design of participatory endeavors. Huvila, Johnston, and Roued-Cunliffe (2022) assert that the diversity of views and practices make it nearly impossible to establish a blanket definition of what participation is and all that it entails. They note that a common feature of participatory endeavors is power sharing between the institution and the users and observe that common approaches to participation within the LAM context include co-curated exhibitions, crowdsourcing, co-creation, user-driven innovation, and special interest activities. Rasmussen (2016) includes volunteering, interactive displays, workshops, co-creation, user-driven design, and social reading activities, such as book clubs, as forms of participation within public library contexts, the latter of which is an area of increased activity in Nordic libraries in the past decade and a half, with many of the groups being led by participants (Rydbeck et al., 2022). Simon (2010) categorizes participatory practices into four types: contributory projects, collaborative projects, co-creative projects, and hosted projects, reflecting the various degrees of power sharing in participatory endeavors. Importantly, Huvila (2015, 2020) notes that participatory

endeavors can involve multiple stakeholders and types of LAM institutions, with the focus centered on the institution or an external group, and the work carried out digitally or physically.

Previous research that is especially relevant to this study, and that was touched upon in the previous section, comes from the *ALM Field, Digitalization and the Public Sphere (ALMPUB)* research project. The main results from the research project are published in the book *Libraries, Archives and Museums as Democratic Spaces in a Digital Age* (Audunson et al., 2020) and more in-depth analysis of the data have been published in research articles, some of which are relevant here. One of the studies from the project indicates that attitudes toward user participation in Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish LAMs have many similarities, though there is some variation across countries and professions. The findings of the study indicate that while the LAM professionals are positive toward engaging users as contributors of additional information and engaging them in dialog, they remain in favor of maintaining curatorial responsibility (Andresen et al., 2020). A study by Huvila (2020) on library professionals' subject positions and their related interpretative repertoires in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Norway, and Sweden in relation to user participation further suggests that while librarians conceptualize user participation as a resource, their views on to what extent the activity should be controlled by professionals varies across countries.

Furthermore, there is evidence of some degree of variation in the roles of LAM professionals. Another ALMPUB study on LAM professionals in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Norway, and Sweden indicates that librarians and archivists are of the opinion that their role is to be critical promoters of cultural heritage, whereas museum professionals tend to see their role as more neutral promoters of cultural heritage (Audunson et al., 2020). A recent study on the perceptions that public librarians in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Poland, and Sweden have of their professional roles shows evidence of a relatively unified professional culture, yet with some variation in how they perceive their roles and the competencies needed to carry them out. The lack of competencies related to working with various social groups, including immigrants and youth, and related to the digital extension of library services were indicated by respondents in most of the countries, and especially in the Nordic countries (Johnston et al., 2021). Thus, considering these variations, there remains a need to gain insights into how LAM professionals' perceptions of their professional roles correlate with their attitudes toward participation.

This brings us to the question of how LAM professionals might relate to users in participatory endeavors, especially in relation to the nature of power sharing that takes place and the areas in which they are involving and sharing power with users. More specifically, it puts into question who is considered the expert in LAMs' participatory endeavors. The writing of Westberg and Jensen (2017) on who the expert is in participatory heritage differentiates between two broad approaches to the way LAM professionals relate to users and, consequently, engage in power sharing: the cathedral approach and the bazaar approach. The cathedral approach is more closed, with the experts, which in this case are the LAM professionals, disseminating information in a controlled and generally more restricted top-down manner, thus significantly limiting, or excluding user participation, whereas the bazaar approach is more open and is constantly changing and developing in a bottom-up manner. Participation is inherent to the structure of the bazaar, since knowledge is created by an ever-changing group of users and LAM professionals serve as a sort of "tent pole" to keep the operation up and running. Relevant to this study, what leanings might be apparent in LAM professionals' perceptions of their roles and attitudes toward participation? Do the leanings align with LAM professionals serving as tent-pole operators facilitating bottom-up knowledge creation or as supreme authorities disseminating knowledge with limited or no input from users?

Leanings to the two approaches might also occur across the different areas of activity within a library, archive, or museum. Sani (2015, p. 6) observes in her writing on the participation paradigm and museums that user participation is more often seen in the front-of-house activities,

such as exhibitions, education, and other face-to-face activities, and less so in backstage functions, such as collection development and conservation, which, she asserts, appear to be considered the exclusive domain of the professionals. Considering this issue more broadly, how might LAM professionals' views on user participation align more with front-of-house activities or backstage functions?

4. Theoretical framework

4.1. Subject positions and interpretative repertoires

The analysis of LAM professionals' questionnaire responses pertaining to their roles and attitudes toward user participation aims to identify subject positions with associated interpretative repertoires, which serve as conceptual tools for interpreting how their roles and attitudes correlate.

Subject positions are the vantage points, which are based broadly on our identities or perceived roles, that shape how we view the world and, subsequently, influence the way we navigate and interact in our social environments (Huvila, 2020).

Interpretative repertoires is a concept used in some forms of discourse analysis that is based on the idea, as discussed by McKenzie (2005), that people use language to construct versions of the social world. Huvila (2020) asserts that interpretative repertoires are abstractions that stem from direct personal language use as well as from other means of expression, such as self-produced texts or other articulations of points of view (e.g., multiple choice responses in surveys) and, as Wetherell and Potter (1988) state, they can be seen as "building blocks speakers use for constructing versions of actions, cognitive processes, and other phenomena." (p. 172).

The perspective builds on the one drawn from the social constructivist positioning theory (van Langenhove & Harré, 1998) that different views of participation and relatedness of professional roles are assumed by or imposed on people. Using the concepts of subject positions and interpretative repertoires put forth by Potter (1996), the discourse theory of Wetherell (1998), and those used earlier in the LAM context by Tuominen (2001), the present study explores LAM professionals' positions and corresponding repertoires in relation to user participation and their perceived professional roles in relation to a selection of related professions.

In contrast to the use of the concepts in qualitative discourse, this study follows Huvila, Cajander, Daniels, and Åhlfeldt (2015) in arguing that, apart from speech and text, subject positions and interpretative repertoires can also be expressed and captured by analyzing quantitative survey data using exploratory factor analysis. Similar to collecting utterances of perspectives and views expressed in text and speech and categorizing them, these utterances can also be articulated and obtained in a quantitative survey based on questions answered on a Likert-like scale (from completely agree to completely disagree) and analyzed in analogous terms to categorize text using exploratory factor analysis to extract categories from the data.

4.2. Four-quadrant model of user engagement

Determining LAM professionals' subject positions necessitates an overarching yet nuanced conceptual framework for analyzing the overall leanings of the professionals' attitudes toward participation. Therefore, based on the previously discussed concepts of the cathedral vs the bazaar (Westberg & Jensen, 2017) and the reflections of Sani (2015) on front-of-house activities vs backstage functions, this study proposes a four-quadrant model of user engagement (see Fig. 1) that illustrates the various ways that LAM professionals might relate to and engage with users in participatory endeavors:

The model permits analyzing LAM professionals' subject positions according to general leanings or tendencies rather than according to strict dichotomies. The importance of being able to gauge the general leanings is important because, according to Dahlgren and Joke Hermes (2015, p. 123), "participation does not per se have to involve perfectly symmetrical power relations, and in most cases it does not. Yet it is important to be able to gauge the depth of any participatory context if one is making a case for democracy." The growing role of LAM institutions in the development of democracy, specifically cultural democracy, imposes a participatory shift in their activities, even if institutional constraints will not allow full use of opportunities to engage users. Do LAM professionals' views on participation lean toward a bazaar approach or a cathedral approach, and do they tend toward particular areas of operation such as front of house activities or backstage functions?

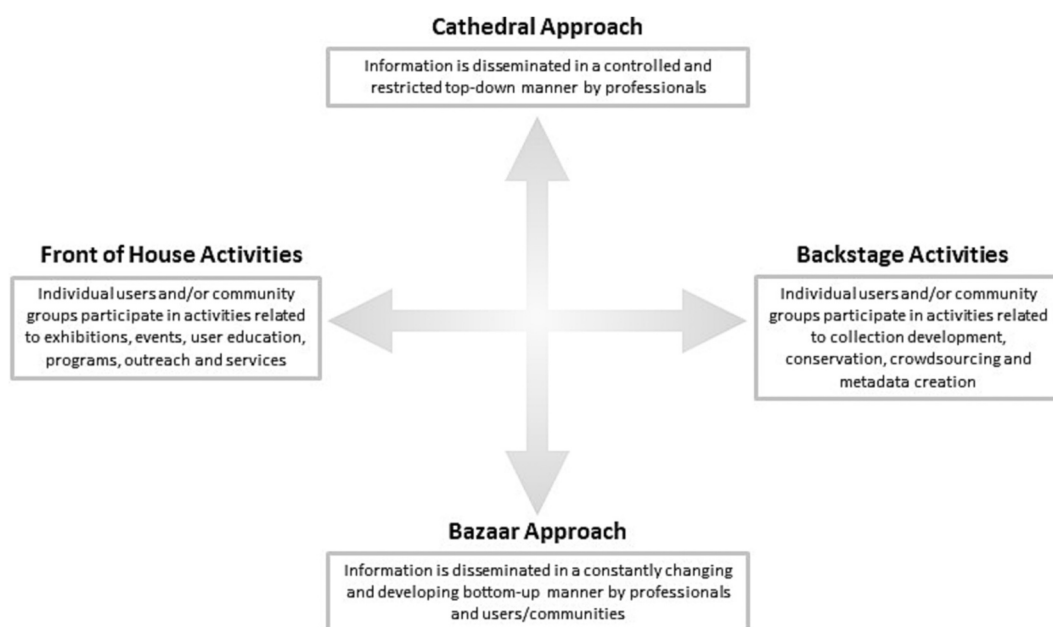


Fig. 1. Four-quadrant model of user engagement.

5. Method

The findings presented in this article were obtained as part of the three-year, multi-country research project titled *The ALM Field, Digitalization and the Public Sphere (ALMPUB)* that was financed by the Norwegian Research Council's KULMEDIA program. For this article, factor analysis is performed on the results from online questionnaires sent to library, archive, and museum professionals in Norway and Sweden. This was done through contacting directors in local government libraries, archives, and museums and asking them to distribute the questionnaire to their employees as well as via professional mailing lists. The questionnaires were distributed in winter 2018 and spring 2019. The results cannot be generalized because randomized samples were not obtained.

Within the research project, it was necessary to define the three professional roles: librarians, archivists, and museum professionals. The definitions were included in the questionnaires administered to the professionals to ensure that the staff members filling out the questionnaires could be certain that they were part of the intended target group. This was especially important as professional qualifications vary in the two countries included in the research. The professional roles were defined as follows:

A *librarian* is defined as any employee working in a public library with a diploma in librarianship or any employee, regardless of educational background, with professional responsibility for developing and mediating library services to the public. An *archivist* is defined as any employee with responsibility for archival appraisal, archival and historical outreach programs within archives, collection management, curating exhibitions, mediation and archival pedagogics and/or research. Directors of archives are included. *Museum professionals* are defined as employees with responsibility for collection management, curating exhibitions, mediation and museum pedagogy and/or research. Leaders of museums are also included (Audunson et al., 2020).

The present inquiry is based on the analysis of in total 19 statements relating to respondents' views on LAMs and participation and 10 statements relating to respondents' views on the similarities between a set of professions (R1–10) developed on the basis of input from LAM professionals and a review of how LAM professionals' current and changing work duties have been described in the literature (incl. Huvila, 2012; Huvila, Holmberg, Kronqvist-Berg, Nivakoski, & Wid'en, 2013; Huvila, 2016; Kallberg, 2012) and that of LAM professionals' work measured on an 11-point Likert-like scale where 0 means "disagree completely", and 10 means "agree completely with the statement" (Table 1). The analysis was conducted in R 4.0.3 using the function `stat.desc` from the package `pastecs` for descriptive statistics (to answer RQ1 and RQ2). The package `factanal` was used to conduct an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the data with principal component analysis (PCA) as a method of extracting factors. The data fulfil the commonly accepted criteria of the sample size ($N = 1370$), the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin test of sampling accuracy 0.927, and significance (Sig. 0.000) in the Bartlett test. A three-factor model was chosen on the basis of the analysis

Table 1

LAM professionals' perceptions of their professional role in relation to those of neighboring professions.

Professions / Roles	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1. Moderator	3.42	1.41
2. Teacher	3.06	1.38
3. Communication officer	2.96	1.50
4. Editor	2.71	1.73
5. Social worker	2.37	1.56
6. Event manager	2.21	1.61
7. Popular education specialist	2.17	1.71
8. Recreation instructor	2.04	1.62
9. Web designer	2.04	1.62
10. Social media specialist	1.69	1.53

Scale: 0 (very little) to 5 (very high).

of Scree plot, eigen-values, and the non-triviality of the factors. A linear regression analysis was performed using the `lm` function to detect associations between factors (F1-F3) and professions (R1–10) and answer the RQ3.

6. Findings

The total number of responses included in this study was 1370, of which 328 were male (23.9%), 1025 female (74.8%) and 17 chose other or prefer not to say (1.2%). There were 955 respondents (69.7%) with educational backgrounds in a LAM discipline (archival, library and information or museum studies) and 236 respondents (17.4%) who worked at an archive, 866 (63.2%) at a library, and 268 (19.5%) at a museum. 543 of the respondents were from Norway and 843 from Sweden. The median age of respondents was 46 years (range 20–78).

6.1. RQ1: How do LAM professionals perceive their professional role in relation to those of neighboring professions?

The LAM professionals were asked how they perceived their role as professionals in their local community by comparing their role to that of a selection of other professions. They were given a list of roles commonly associated with those of LAM professionals and asked to indicate on a scale from 0 (very little) to 5 (very high) the degree to which each role corresponded to their work. The 10 roles listed in Table 1 were determined by the researchers based on LAM-related research and input from LAM professionals. The roles included here are only the roles that were presented to all three groups of professionals; thus, they represent a core subset of the original lists.

Moderator is the highest ranking role that, based on this subset of the data, LAM professionals in Norway and Sweden perceive as most similar to their own respective professional roles. This is followed by the roles of teacher and communication officer.

6.2. RQ2: What are LAM professionals' attitudes toward participation and participatory practices at their institutions?

Questionnaire respondents were asked to rate 19 statements relating to their attitudes toward user participation. Each statement was rated (Table 2) according to importance on a scale from 0 (not important) to 10 (very important). Related work based on the same data has been published elsewhere (see Huvila, 2020).

Considering the results from Table 2, the five highest-ranking statements according to mean scores indicate that LAM professionals' attitudes toward participation generally are that previous owners of collection items or stakeholders are the contributors of greatest importance and that empowerment is a major reason to engage participants in the work of LAMs. Many also appear to think that users can contribute by volunteering and participating in the work of LAMs and can enrich collections by providing additional information.

6.3. RQ3: How do LAM professionals' perceptions of their roles correlate with their views on user participation?

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify the underlying relationships between the LAM professionals' perceptions of their professional roles and their attitudes toward user participation. The analysis was based on the 10 statements relating to respondents' views on the similarities between selected professions (Table 1) and the 19 statements relating to respondents' views on LAMs and participation (Table 2). The analysis produced three factors (Appendix 1) that were interpreted as subject positions with associated interpretative repertoires. Each interpretative repertoire was given an identifying name that corresponds with the characteristics of the principal component: (F1) power sharing, (F2) outsourcing, and (F3) engaging experts (Appendix 1). The strongest subject position, power sharing, represents a view that

Table 2
LAM professionals' attitudes toward user participation.

Statements	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1. The most important contributors are previous owners or stakeholders of collection items	7.66	2.75
2. A major reason for engaging people to participate in the work of [LAM]s is to empower them as individuals	7.56	2.74
3. Engaging the public as volunteers helps [LAM]s to deliver high-quality services with smaller financial resources	7.51	2.71
4. Managing [LAM] collections in the future is impossible without contributions from the public	7.17	2.88
5. The public can enrich [LAM] collections by providing additional information	7.17	2.68
6. Engaging users as contributors is a democratic responsibility of [LAM]s	6.91	2.81
7. Engaging the public to contribute is how [LAM]s should work with their users today	6.73	2.84
8. Engaging the public reduces the number of professional staff needed in [LAM]s	6.43	3.06
9. Letting the members of the public contribute is a form of listening to them and giving them an opportunity to experience benefits of [LAM]s on their own premises	6.31	3.02
10. Many users are more knowledgeable of the collections than [LAM] professionals, both as subject experts and as users of the collections	5.66	3.17
11. Members of the public who contribute should be treated as equals to the professionals	5.00	3.08
12. User engagement at [LAM]s should be a user-driven activity (i.e., decisions should be made by users)	4.86	3.00
13. A significant aspect of participation is to engage users within their own fields of interest or in ways that are relevant to their own life situations	4.65	3.00
14. New digital technologies allow [LAM]s to engage users in the management of collections	4.27	2.94
15. User engagement at [LAM]s should be marshaled by professionals	3.47	2.53
16. The large number of passive, non-contributing members of the public is a problem; we should expect more from our users	3.29	2.57
17. Engaging users as contributors provides important support for public discourse in society	3.25	2.44
18. A major reason for engaging people to participate in the work of [LAM]s is to draw more visitors and users to the institutions	1.98	2.04
19. It is very important to engage the public to work together with professionals in [LAM]s	1.65	1.47

Scale: 0 (very little) to 10 (very high).

puts emphasis on empowering and engaging users and, at least to a certain degree, on shared decision-making between LAM professionals and users. Outsourcing is a subject position that frames participation in terms of engaging users in carrying out tasks or other work-related activities that would normally be done by the professionals. The last and weakest subject position, engaging experts, represents a way of thinking that sees participation as collaboration with external experts in the relevant subject matter that is marshaled by the LAM professionals.

A regression analysis (Appendix 2) between subject positions and professional roles was then performed to gain insight into how the perceived professional roles correlate with LAM professionals' views on user participation. The findings from this analysis are as follows.

6.3.1. Power sharing

The findings indicate that all professional roles included in the survey align with the subject position that views participation from the perspective of power sharing (F1), though to varying degrees. This suggests that power sharing as a way of thinking about participation aligns with a broad view of the role and duties of LAM professionals. Being a LAM professional incorporates a wide variety of duties that are

similar to some extent to those of a teacher (R1), communication officer (R2), social worker (R3), recreation instructor (R4), web designer (R5), social media specialist (R6), event manager (R7), editor (R8), popular education specialist (R9), and moderator (R10).

6.3.2. Outsourcing

The subject position that frames participation in terms of outsourcing (F2) is associated with finding similarities with the professional roles of LAM professionals and those of communication officers (R2), web designers (R5), social media specialists (R6), editors (R8), and moderators (R10). Rather than aligning the role of LAM professionals with that of a jack-of-all-trades, the subject position is associated with professions that are affiliated with information provision, creation, and exchange as well as with digital services or activities. Notably, the professions linking to direct face-to-face interaction with non-professionals, including teacher (R1), social worker (R3), recreation instructor (R4), event manager (R7), and popular education specialist (R9), are not associated with this way of thinking about participation.

6.3.3. Engaging experts

Engaging experts is associated negatively with the roles of social worker (R3), recreation instructor (R4), and event manager (R7), and positively with none. This suggests that thinking of participation in terms of engaging users as experts is related to thinking that LAM professionals' work is markedly different from and unrelated to that of social workers, recreation instructors, and event managers. It is conceivable, based on these correlations, that if the list of professional roles included expert or research duties, they might have correlated with this subject position.

7. Discussion

In response to RQ1, the most prevalent view professionals have of their own roles appears to lean toward that of facilitators or intermediary agents. However, as reported in Table 1, the three highest-ranking roles perceived by LAM professionals to be most similar to their own all relate to imparting, sharing, and disseminating knowledge and information, which have traditionally been core roles of the LAM professions. While none of the listed professions score very high, the prominence of moderator, teacher, and communication officer suggests that in general, but with considerable individual variation, LAM professionals consider that their role is closest to intermediary agents or facilitators, which would be conducive to, possibly even reflective of, more participatory approaches to their work.

In response to RQ2, participation appears to be perceived as central to LAMs and to their delivery of high quality collections and services. As reported in Table 2, the ranking of mean scores for statements related to user participation suggests, first and foremost, a diversity of opinions regarding power sharing, and possibly even conflicting opinions. A slight inclination toward low to moderate power sharing might be deduced as a result of the following statements (10–13) not scoring higher and having a comparably high standard deviation: that contributors should be treated as equals to the professionals, that user engagement should be a user-driven activity and relevant to their own life situations, and that users are more knowledgeable than LAM professionals as subject experts and as users of the collections. However, the lowest-ranked statement (15), which is that user engagement at [LAM]s should be marshaled by professionals, suggests an inclination toward high rather than low power sharing.

The highest ranking statements as reported in Table 2 further indicate that user contributions are generally seen as important or necessary for managing collections going forward, and as a way to deliver high-quality services with smaller financial resources. Collectively, this suggests that the questionnaire respondents consider participatory activities to be important or necessary and that both the institutions and the users can be intended beneficiaries, the institutions through the development

of high quality services and collections, as well as financially, and the users through empowerment. However, the specific views of how this should be done and what it implies appear to differ.

In response to RQ3, all professional roles included in the survey align with the subject position that views participation from the perspective of power sharing, though to varying degrees. These findings suggest a moderate bazaar-leaning view of participation. This view of participation appears to align with both front of house activities and backstage functions because all roles align with this subject position, both those that relate to face-to-face interaction, such as teacher and event manager, and those that relate to more backstage functions, such as editor and web designer. Moreover, the statements associated with power sharing are related to participation both in terms of visiting or using an LAM, which relates to front of house activities, and in terms of contributing to LAM collections, which relates to backstage functions.

There are some interesting trends concerning the professional roles that align with the subject position that views participation from the perspective of outsourcing. It appears that professionals whose work is most related to information provision, creation, and exchange, and who have greater involvement in digital services or activities, align more with this subject position, including web designers, social media specialists, communication officers and, possibly, editors and moderators. Participatory activities such as crowdsourcing and metadata creation are common means of obtaining information or input from users and are typically done via the Internet using websites, wikis, or social media sites. Interestingly, the professional roles that are linked to direct face-to-face interaction, including teacher, social worker, recreation instructor, event manager, and popular education specialist, are not associated with this way of thinking about participation. These findings suggest that this view of participation does not align with front of house activities, but more with backstage functions. They also suggest that there is a split between a more bazaar-leaning view of participation and a cathedral-leaning view of LAM professionals' roles.

The weakest subject position, engaging experts, or the view of participation as collaboration with external experts, is the most cathedral-leaning view of participation, since the roles of social worker, recreation instructor, and event manager relate negatively to this view. In other words, from this perspective, these professional roles are unrelated to the domain of LAM professionals. Interestingly, they are the roles most focused on face-to-face interaction and on what might be considered front of house activities. This view of participation aligns closest with backstage functions, since it builds on statements relating to in-depth collaboration with specific knowledgeable experts, including previous owners and stakeholders of collections rather than with the general public. While LAM professionals should still be in charge, the expert participants should be treated as equals.

Overall, it seems that many surveyed LAM professionals in Norway and Sweden primarily see themselves as experts within their respective fields and that they expect that they have yet to give up this role in favor of a more bottom-up approach to user participation. Yet the main conclusion of the findings is that there are three significantly different ways of thinking about participation among professionals. The self-understanding among LAM professionals is interesting because there has been a growing discourse in recent years emphasizing the importance of user and community orientation as a means to secure the legitimacy and future relevance of LAM institutions. This has been expressed by [Simon \(2010, 2016\)](#), among others. Such considerations concerning the relationship between a high level of user participation on the one hand and institutional legitimacy and relevance on the other lead to the question of whether there might be a discrepancy between the LAM professionals' attitudes toward user participation and users' experiences of LAM institutions.

Furthermore, one could ask whether a reserved approach to user participation among LAM professionals that implies a limited amount of power sharing might be counterproductive to the development of cultural democracy. Thus, LAM professionals might need to reconsider and

develop their attitude toward participation. The implementation of participation as a basis for cultural democracy presupposes a certain degree of actual power distribution to secure real engagement among the users. Otherwise, there is a risk that the users perceive the participation as superficial and a means only to support the legitimization of the LAM institution.

In this context, it would be relevant to carry out studies that could shed light on users' attitudes toward and perceptions of their own role in participating in LAM institutions. Such studies could show how users experience user participation and its importance, and the results could be discussed in relation to front of house activities and backstage functions in LAM institutions as well as to a cathedral or bazaar approach among LAM professionals. From a broader cultural political perspective, this might also lead to a greater understanding of how cultural democracy can be understood and what it implies in terms of involvement, collaboration, co-creation, and influence.

Further reflecting on the theoretical framework used for the study, the proposed four-quadrant model of user engagement used to analyze the findings of this study has been instrumental in providing an overarching yet nuanced understanding of LAM professionals' attitudes and approaches to participation, per their subject positions. The nuances were obtained by the model's emphasis on general leanings or tendencies, which would be lost if the results would have been analyzed according to strict dichotomies. Last, but not least, the findings from this study relating to the subject position that frames participation in terms of outsourcing highlight the need to consider user engagement in both physical and online spaces as well as in relation to face-to-face and digital activities. Various tendencies or leanings relating to user engagement in the physical and digital realms may arise as LAM collections, services, and programs are increasingly made available online.

8. Conclusion

By using a four-quadrant model of user engagement to analyze LAM professionals' subject position of how cultural democracy can be nurtured through user engagement, the findings suggest that the surveyed LAM professionals in Norway and Sweden view participation as low to moderate power sharing with users, regardless of how they perceive their own professional roles. The most prominent mindset among the professionals is to think about participation in terms of power sharing, but participation can also be framed as outsourcing of certain tasks to users and as engaging experts rather than the general public in closer collaboration with LAM professionals. However, the view of participation as collaboration with external experts is the weakest one, thus implying that it is more typical to think of users as members of the general public rather than as experts in participatory endeavors. These findings align with the recent discourse emphasizing the importance of user and community orientation as means to secure the legitimacy and relevance of LAM institutions. However, further research is needed on user's attitudes toward and perceptions of their own role as well as on how they perceive their interactions with LAM professionals to understand how different forms of participation align with the professionals' and users' goals and expectations relating to participatory endeavors and their outcomes.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

Acknowledgements

This research was made possible by a research grant received from the KULMEDIA program of The Research Council of Norway. We would also like to thank the ALMPUB project partners, especially those in Norway and Sweden, for their contributions project.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2023.101249>.

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